

VISTA HERMOSA PARK

Project Plan

Introduction

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) owns an approximately 34-acre site located northwest of the intersection of Beaudry and First Street in the City of Los Angeles. The site was originally planned to be the site of the Belmont Learning Center. As a result of environmental and seismic concerns, work on the Belmont Learning Center was halted and the project was reevaluated. During that process, the LAUSD School Board Member for the Belmont area, Jose Huizar, approached the Conservancy with a proposal that included a smaller school and the possible use of a portion of the site for a park. This proposal, called the Vista Hermosa option, was adopted by the School Board on May 22, 2003, when the School Board directed staff to work with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy on an agreement to develop the western portion of the site into a park. Under this new option, the school would offer a smaller 2600 student campus on a traditional September to June calendar, and an MRCA park and a joint use soccer field would be built adjacent to it. In a joint lease agreement signed with the district, MRCA was responsible for the design and construction of the natural park and soccer field. The proposed park site was contemplated to be approximately 10.5 acres in size. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the Mountains Recreation Conservation Authority (MRCA) worked closely with LAUSD to develop the joint use park project.

The project is consistent with the *San Gabriel and Los Angeles River Watershed and Openspace Plan*, the *Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Plan*, and the *Rim of the Valley Corridor Plan*.

The school (Roybal Learning Center) opened in September 2008. After seeking extensive input from the local community MRCA completed the 10.5-acre park's design and began construction in 2006. Vista Hermosa Natural Park opened on July 19, 2008.

Project Site Description

The park site is located in the Temple/Beaudry Neighborhood of the City of Los Angeles, and is bounded by First Street, Toluca Street, Colton Street, and the new Roybal Learning Center. A natural park with watershed, recreational and educational features was developed on approximately 10.5 acres located in the western portion of the 34-acre site owned by LAUSD. This park includes native plant communities, several watershed features, educational opportunities, a soccer field, picnic areas, various play areas and trails, and an outdoor amphitheater. Three structures totaling approximately 2,500 square feet were developed within the park to house two restroom facilities and one office. Two surface parking lots are provided in the western portion of the site near the soccer field.

Government Entities with Jurisdiction Over Project Area

Los Angeles Unified School District
City of Los Angeles
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power
Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy
Division of State Architects
Department Toxic Substances Controls
California Department of Education
Los Angeles Police Department
Los Angeles City Fire Department

Planning Objectives and Principles Sought to be Achieved by the Project

Vista Hermosa Natural Park has a number of objectives. The connection to the adjacent school site provides unique opportunities for environmental, natural and cultural history and science studies. The park includes a soccer field, several picnic areas, trails, interpretive panels, an adventure play area, and an outdoor amphitheater.

Educational goals:

- Implementation of visitor serving amenities that educate and communicate the significance and value of natural, historical, and cultural resources of the Los Angeles River Watershed and increase the understanding and enjoyment of these resources. These amenities include interpretive signage and materials, naturalist led programs, special seminars and events in parkland owned or managed by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.
- Create and distribute interpretive materials, including site specific materials, program schedules, safety information and self guided interpretative materials that are designed and implemented to increase visitors' enjoyment and understanding of the watershed.
- Implement junior ranger programs for youth age 7-12 designed to increase the knowledge, skills and abilities of youth in the outdoors.
- Continue operation of monthly Transit to Trails Program for families from disadvantaged communities to parklands owned and managed by the MRCA in the watershed and participation in interpretive programs at those parks.
- Promote stewardship of the landscape in accordance with the "San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers Watershed and Open Space Plan" ("Common Ground" plan).
- Involve the public through educational and outreach programs in accordance with the "Common Ground" plan.

Aesthetics Goals:

- Create a natural environment in urban Los Angeles.
- Create sustainable scenic passive recreation site.
- Provide a watershed experience of demonstrating wise water use.
- Create expand and improve public open space throughout the region in accordance with the “Common Ground” plan.

Environmental Goals:

- Provide for watershed protection in the urban environment.
- Capture stormwater that falls on-site in underground cistern and reuse for on-site irrigation.
- Replenish the aquifer below with the use of permeable paving on all hard surfaces.
- Implement the “Common Ground” plan and utilize it in an ongoing management process.
- Improve quality of surface water and groundwater in accordance with the “Common Ground” plan.
- Optimize water resources to reduce dependence on imported water in accordance with the “Common Ground” plan.
- Encourage sustainable growth to balance environmental, social and economic benefits in accordance with the “Common Ground” plan.
- Encourage multiple-objective planning and projects in accordance with the “Common Ground” plan.

The project (park and school) was determined to have a significant effect on the environment and mitigation measures were made a condition of the approval of the project. An Environmental Impact Report was prepared for the project by LAUSD, pursuant to the provisions of and in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and was adopted on June 22, 2004. The project is consistent with all applicable land use plans and ordinances and does not conflict with all relevant Los Angeles City ordinances and general plan documents. A statement of Overriding Considerations was adopted. The EIR with comments and responses and record of project approval is available to the general public at LAUSD Office of Environmental Health and Safety, 355 S. Grand Ave., 15th Floor, Los Angeles, California 90017.

Proposed Land Uses

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), a joint powers agency of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, funded, constructed, will operate, and maintain the

natural park under a lease and joint use agreement with LAUSD. All areas of this park are open for public use. Also, Roybal Learning Center (formerly known as Central Los Angeles Area New High School #11) and other schools in the area will use the park for a variety of educational and interpretive programs. Recreational activities are intended to be low impact in nature such as bird watching, walking, nature studies, and cultural and interpretive events.

Detailed Site Analysis of Vista Hermosa Park

Approximately 34-acres are currently owned by LAUSD, however the park only utilizes 10.5-acres of the overall site. The Vista Hermosa Natural Park project is a joint-use project between LAUSD and MRCA. The partnership between LAUSD and MRCA was formalized with a lease agreement for the site in 2003. MRCA has site control over the park and was responsible for design and construction of all park elements including the soccer field. LAUSD has a Joint Use agreement with Los Angeles City Recreation and Parks to operate and maintain the soccer field.

The subject property is within District 45 of Assemblymember Kevin De Leon, District 22 of Senator Gilbert Cedillo, the First District of Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina and District 1 of Los Angeles City Councilmember Ed Reyes.

Government Agencies, Organizations and Private Parties Consulted

Over the course of project planning, design, and construction phases extensive outreach was done to inform the public and other entities on the progress of the natural park and the school. More than 50 meetings were conducted by the MRCA and LAUSD. Over 100 stakeholder groups provided input, were consulted and were updated during the stages of the project. Some of the agencies, stakeholders and non profits consulted include:

Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD)
LAUSD Office of Environmental Health and Safety
City of Los Angeles
Division of State Architects
Department of Toxic Substances Control
Mia Lehrer and Associates
Los Angeles Police Department
Neighboring property owners
Greater Echo Park Elysian Neighborhood Council (GEPENC)
ArtCorpsLA
Friends of LA River
The Wildwoods Foundation

Woodcraft Rangers
Para Los Ninos
Casa de la Cultura Maya
ArtShareLA
LA Conservation Corps
Youth Empowered Scholastic Sport Service Soccer (YESSS)
South West Voter Registration and Education Project (SWVREP)
Alliance for a Better Community (ABC)
Central City Neighborhood Partners (CCNP)
Hon. Kevin de Leon, California State Assemblymember
Hon. Gloria Molina, Los Angeles County Supervisor
Hon. Ed P. Reyes, Los Angeles City Councilmember
Hon. Jose Huizar, Los Angeles City Councilmember
Hon. Monica Garcia, Los Angeles Unified School District Board President

Analysis of Economic Feasibility of Proposed Project

The property will be leased for one dollar a year with a 20 year lease with renewal clause. The initial park design and community outreach was funded by a Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Proposition 12 grant to the MRCA. Funding was secured for the capital improvements by a series of outside grants. The funding sources included Proposition 50 (Water Quality, Supply and Safe Drinking Water Projects, Coastal Wetlands Purchase and Protection Act of 2002), Proposition 12 (Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000), Proposition 84 (Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006), Proposition A (Los Angeles County Safe Neighborhood Parks Act), Proposition A (Youth Employment Services), Weingart Foundation, Amateur Athletic Foundation (AAF), City of Los Angeles Proposition K, and City of Los Angeles Community Development Block Grant.